

Book reviews

Basic Sexual Medicine. By Eric Trimmer, 1978. Pp. 238. William Heinemann Medical Books Ltd, London (£6.95).

Sexual medicine has traditionally been imbued with myth and folklore, and hence it is gratifying to find that Dr Trimmer has managed to produce an objective, readable, and very practical book on the subject. The field is extensive, and no doubt the problem was what to leave out rather than how much to put into a fairly slim volume.

The emphasis is rightly on functional sexual disorders. Starting with a description of male and female sex organs, the aetiology and management of sexual dysfunction in men and women is then discussed. Specific regimens, such as masturbation therapy and Sensate Focus techniques, are detailed in an excellent appendix and there are also sections on ageing and sexual function, sex and the handicapped, and intersexuality. The commoner sexual deviations ('paraphilias' is the term preferred by the author) are also dealt with in some detail. Antiandrogenic compounds, such as cyproterone, are advocated to treat paedophiliacs and certain other sexual offenders. Rape and its forensic implications are included in the same chapter. The final section evaluates current trends and assumptions in sexual medicine, and this is the most critical and, in some ways, the best part of the book. The very valid point is made that therapists must collate data on treatment techniques and follow up patients adequately in order to put the management of sexual problems on a more scientific footing.

The text occasionally falters when it encroaches upon the disciplines of gynaecology and venereology. Bartholin's glands are dismissed in a rather cursory fashion as 'probable vestigial structures' and 'medical and surgical treatment' of cervical erosions is mentioned without adequate explanation of these terms. Epididymitis is attributed commonly to weight-lifting with a full bladder and rarely to gonorrhoea or non-specific urethritis; here we are on decidedly uncertain ground.

The clinical and historical notes are appropriate and the work contains many fascinating pieces of information. I did not know for instance that the Devil has a forked penis or that anal intercourse with a woman is still theoretically punishable with

life imprisonment in England and Wales. One certainly has to watch one's step.

J. Davidson Parker

A Textbook of Venereal Diseases. By V. N. Sehgal, 1978. Pp. 117. Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, India (Rupees 36.00).

The book seems to be intended for undergraduate students and general practitioners in Indian sub-continent concerned with the sexually transmitted diseases.

The introductory chapters on epidemiology of venereal diseases and applied anatomy of genital organs are nicely written and are adequate, but there is an important omission. The author has completely ignored the subject of history-taking and examination, which are so important.

The chapters on gonorrhoea and syphilis are well covered, though one may tend to disagree with the author in places, especially concerning treatment.

It was disappointing to find little new on chancroid, a condition rarely seen in the West and so either forgotten or poorly investigated. Chlamydial investigations are not mentioned in the diagnosis of lymphogranuloma venereum. Again, in the diagnosis of granuloma inguinale more practical details could be provided for the taking of tissue smears.

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The Gonococcus. Edited by Richard B. Roberts, 1977. Pp. 436. John Wiley and Sons Ltd, New York, USA (£24.70).

This is a well-produced and readable book, which deals with all aspects of the gonococcus, although only the first four of the 19 chapters will be of interest to most clinicians. These chapters cover epidemiology, control, diagnostic methods, and clinical aspects. Michael Rein starts with an excellent review of the epidemiology of gonococcal infection, which whets one's appetite for further chapters. It is a shame that the sections devoted to control and prevention of gonorrhoea in the USA and UK are written in such disparate styles, making comparison difficult. Most of the UK data

comes from the British Co-operative Clinical Group Survey of 1970, which is rather dated now. Overall, there is a strong North American bias with only three of the 29 contributors working in Europe. Treatment regimens are, therefore, sometimes excessive by UK standards (for example, 20 megaunits crystalline penicillin G daily for pelvic infection), and no argument is advanced against epidemiological treatment. Luckily, few neologisms are found, although Londoners are presumably part of 'the urbanised'. It is good to see Douglas Kellogg suggesting rapid methods for recognising the presence of gonococci.

There are useful reviews of auxotyping, plasmids, pili, and interactions of gonococci with epithelial cells and leucocytes, and chapters on gonococcal biochemistry and physiology. Unfortunately, the emergence of the β -lactamase-producing gonococci predicted by Dr Falkow came rather late in the preparation of this book and, therefore, a relatively brief mention of the problem is made, which is a pity. Recent work on other forms of antibiotic resistance, however, are well covered. It is interesting to learn that the gonococcus has a restricted metabolic potential, providing further evidence that this organism is highly adapted to its host. There are a few typographical errors. The index is adequate, and most chapters have a useful list of references. This book competes favourably with others recently published on the same subject, but it is expensive.

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Dermatology and Venereology (Dermatologie und Venereologie). By A. Greither, 1978. Pp. 234, 82 figs. Heidelberg Taschenbücher Basistext Medizin, third edition, vol. 113. Springer, Berlin.

The first edition of this excellent textbook for medical students was reviewed by G. W. Csonka (1973), and his criticisms of its shortcomings in the field of genitourinary medicine remain valid.

The section on venereology remains short, mentioning only gonorrhoea, chancroid, lymphogranuloma venereum, granuloma inguinale, and syphilis. Teaching on these diseases is didactic, but